

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD IN WASHINGTON, D. C., FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 1920.

The sixth meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1920 was held in its office at 1729 New York Avenue, northwest, Washington, D. C., on Friday, March 26, 1920.

The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman;
Mr. Adams;
Mr. Kendall;
Mr. Platt; and
Mr. Greenleaf.

Colonel Ridley, Secretary and Executive Officer, was absent because of being ill at the Walter Reed Hospital.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PRECEDING MEETING: The minutes of the preceding meeting held in Washington, D. C., February 20, 1920, were approved.
2. VICTORY MEDAL: A committee consisting of Mr. Moore and Mr. Adams, representing the Commission of Fine Arts, and Major Burkhardt, of the War Department, were in conference with Mr. A. M. Joyce, Superintendent, and Mr. G. T. Morgan, Officer in charge of the Department of Dies and Medals, of the United States Mint in Philadelphia, on Thursday, March 25th, concerning the production of the 4,765,000 Victory Medals. Major Burkhardt reported that contracts for the production of the medals had been awarded to the

Art Metal Company, Inc., Newark, N. J.;
S. G. Adams Stamp & Stationery Co., St. Louis, Mo.; and
Joseph Mayer, Inc., Seattle, Washington.

The master die of the Victory Medal being in the care of the United States Mint these firms are to secure dies from the Mint from which they will produce the medals. To assure the production of the medals to be of the same standards of excellence as the sample Victory Medals an inspection force is to be organized

consisting of at least Major Burkhardt, representing the War Department, an expert chemist and a metallurgist designated by Dr. S. W. Stratton, Director, of the Bureau of Standards, at Washington, and Mr. James E. Fraser, designer of the medal to represent the Commission of Fine Arts, to whom questions of an artistic character will be referred. The committee agreed that at least one out of every ten medals should be carefully inspected, and that no serial number should be placed on the medal, as had been the case in previous wars. Major Burkhardt reported also that previously it had been the custom to send out the medals by registered mail, franked, from Washington. However, these medals are to be sent from points outside of Washington where the franking privilege for registered mail does not apply, and to send four million medals by registered mail would therefore cost about one-half a million dollars. The committee recommended that the medals be sent out without being registered. Mr. Adams reported that he had seen Colonel Wyllie as to leaving off the serial number from the medals, and that he felt certain the General Staff would agree to this elimination from it. The Commission endorsed the action of the committee.

2. MEADE MEMORIAL: A committee consisting of Mr. Moore, Mr. Adams, and Mr. Greenleaf, visited the studio of Mr. Charles Grafly at Philadelphia at noon on the 25th to inspect the model of the Meade Memorial. Mr. Simon of the firm of architects for the Memorial was also present. The model appeared in fine form; the base being eight feet square, or one-sixth the actual size; the figures were of the same proportion, so that the Memorial would be about fifty feet square at the base, and the figures nine feet in height. The sculpture work had been approved at a previous meeting, and it was the purpose at this meeting to decide upon the architectural features of the Memorial. Mr. Pope and Mr. Platt were prevented from being present. Mr. Kendall arrived at the studio later in the afternoon. He made a thorough inspection of the architectural features and submitted

his criticisms and suggestions at the meeting of the Commission in Washington on March 26th. Mr. Kendall recommended that the name of General Meade be removed from the plinth, as shown on the model, and that simply the word "Meade" under the figure of the General be placed on the cylindrical pedestal. The Commission thought that the words "Gift of the State of Pennsylvania" could be placed on the opposite side. Mr. Kendall did not approve of riveting bronze on the marble, nor did he favor the inlaid work in bronze on the marble. Mr. Kendall stated further that the plinth below the large cyma of the base of the pedestal should be raised at least one-eighth of an inch in height on the model. The Commission accepted the criticisms and suggestions of the Committee and approved the model. Honorable Newton D. Baker, Chairman of the (Congressional) Memorial Committee, and Mr. Grafly were advised accordingly. (See Exhibits A and B).

4. FRANCIS SCOTT KEY MEMORIAL: The Commission of Fine Arts having been requested to send a committee to Baltimore to inspect a proposed new site for the Key Statue a committee consisting of Mr. Moore, Mr. Adams, and Mr. Greenleaf, representing the Commission, visited Baltimore on Thursday, March 25th, and met Mayor Broening and the City Plan Committee (Mr. Joseph W. Shirley, Chairman, and Mr. William W. Emmart, Secretary) in conference on the location of the Key Statue in Fort McHenry Park. Mr. Charles Niehaus, sculptor, also was present. Mr. Shirley reported that originally (1916) it was decided to locate the Monument 400 feet from the entrance, and that about that time it was expected that the Government would turn over the area to the City of Baltimore for park purposes. Subsequently a new site for the Monument was selected about 100 feet further south. Then war came and the whole area was taken by the Government and used for hospital purposes. The Government is still using the area for hospitals, although it is expected that they will be abandoned by June. The location of the Key Statue has therefore been made the subject of consideration, and it is now

desired to locate the statue about 400 feet still further south, or about 500 feet south of the site selected originally. This would place the statue about midway between the entrance and the sea-wall. Mr. Niehaus approves the proposed site. The matter was submitted to Mr. Olmsted, who was a member of the Baltimore Plan Commission, and he gave particular attention to the location of the Key Monument. He approves of the proposed plan, provided assurance be given that the grading and planting will actually be done. (Exhibit C). The Commission of Fine Arts agrees with Mr. Olmsted and approved the proposed location with the proviso that before definite action be taken to erect the statue the authorities shall be in a position to give assurance that the entire work will be carried out. Mr. Shirley and Mr. Niehaus were advised accordingly. (Exhibit D).

5. LEE MANSION AT ARLINGTON: Mr. Swift of the Zone Supply Office, War Department, appeared before the Commission with a plan which embodied suggestions made at previous meetings of the Commission for putting in order the area about the Lee Mansion at Arlington. The Commission approved the plan and recommended that action be taken by the War Department to begin work on carrying out the plan as early as possible. Colonel F. H. Lawton, Zone Supply Officer, was advised accordingly. (Exhibit E).

6. WAR COLLEGE PLANTING PLAN: Under date of March 3, 1920, Mr. Moore called the attention of Major General Lansing H. Beach, Chief Engineer, United States Army, to a planting plan for the easterly side of the War College, which had been prepared for some time by Frederick Law Olmsted. (Exhibit F). Major General Beach advised that he would be glad to see what could be done in the matter so far as it was within his province. Mr. Moore requested Mr. Charles Henlock, Head Gardener at the White House, and Mr. Irving W. Payne, Landscape Architect, Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, to make an inspection trip and to see what could be done toward developing plans. Mr. Henlock made an oral re-

port at the meeting. He advised that some of the trees are too large for removal and that it would be better to buy smaller trees for the area in which it was proposed to plant them. The Commission directed that before taking further action information be secured from officials at the War College as to whether funds for the purchase of the trees could be secured out of money appropriated to maintain the grounds.

7. FOURTH DIVISION MEMORIAL: A sketch for a monument for the Fourth Division designed by Edmond R. Amateis was brought before the Commission. The sketch was considered too slight to give any indication either of the artist's ability or of the merits of his conception. The Commission thought the success of such a work would depend upon the ability with which the details were carried out. There was nothing in the sketch which would make it interesting as a composition. However, it was thought possibly execution might make it so. In order to get an idea of the artist's ability Colonel Mark L. Hersey, General Staff, War College, who has the matter in charge, was advised that it would be desirable to have a small model made and to see some of the executed work of the artist.

8. GAS HOLDER, ANALOSTAN ISLAND: Under date of March 8, 1920, the Commission received the following letter from Lieutenant Colonel C. W. Kutz, Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia:

"The Washington Gas Light Company is the owner of Analostan Island in the Potomac River. The company has recently made application for authority to erect a gas holder on the island, 200 feet in diameter and 212 feet in height. There is considerable doubt as to whether the Commissioners have power under the law to refuse a permit for this structure; but with the assent of the gas company, action is being withheld until the Commissioners have an opportunity to confer with the Fine Arts Commission.

The question at issue is largely whether a single holder of the size indicated will be more objectionable from a general civic standpoint than a larger number of holders of lesser height. An expression of opinion at an early date will be appreciated."

The Engineer Commissioner asked for an expression of opinion in regard to the proposed location of such gas holder on Analostan Island. Mr. Moore reported that on March 16th he was in conference with officials of the Gas Company at the Office of Colonel Kutz concerning the matter. Mr. Moore advised that the Gas Company propose to build a gas holder on the Island which would be 212 feet in height and 200 feet in diameter, which would hold about five million cubic feet of gas, and to cost about one-half a million dollars. Mr. Moore advised that to construct this large gas holder on the Island would mar the beauty of the scenery, and would bring a manufacturing plant into the park area between the Key Bridge and the Highway Bridge. Mr. Moore also reported that he had been in conference with Representative Moore of Virginia on this proposition, and that it was hoped Congress could be persuaded to buy the Island so as to retain it for park purposes, and with the purchase price enable the Gas Company to obtain land elsewhere in Virginia or in Maryland. Mr. Moore advised that the Gas Company has stated through its representative, Mr. McIlhenny, that they do not wish to do anything which will mar the beauty of the city and to create public disfavor, but that something would have to be done to enable them to secure a suitable site to build in view of the growth of the city during the past two years. After a discussion on the subject the Commission stated it would be the sense of the Commission that no manufacturing plant should be located on Analostan Island, and every means should be taken with a view to building the gas holder at another location.

9. INTERSTATE COMMERCE MEMORIAL TABLET: Mr. Holmead, Assistant Secretary of the Interstate Commerce Commission, brought the Commission a preliminary sketch for their memorial tablet which is to be in marble. Mr. Holmead submitted the sketch in order to receive an expression of opinion from the Commission as to what would be the best wording for an inscription, and as to the general character

of the proposed tablet. Mr. Holmead was advised that the matter would receive very careful attention and that he might expect a report from the Commission in the near future.

10. NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL, DESIGNS FOR NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES:

Dr. James R. Angell, Chairman of the National Research Council, and Mr. Bertram G. Goodhue, architect, presented tentative plans for the first portion of a building to be constructed on the block bounded by B, Twenty-first, Twenty-second, and C Streets, northwest, for the use of the National Academy of Sciences. After extended discussion the Commission took the plans under advisement.

11. LINCOLN MEMORIAL PLANTING PLAN: Mr. Moore brought to the attention of the Commission a letter from Mr. Greenleaf regarding the planting plan for the Lincoln Memorial. A general discussion followed and in the afternoon the members of the Commission visited the Lincoln Memorial in company with Mr. Gillen, and Mr. Payne. The English Yew was being put in place. The tree was so small in comparison with the expanse of wall that the Commission felt it essential that three such trees be grouped.

As a matter of procedure calculated to bring about effective work in this planting, the Commission regard it as imperative that Mr. Payne, to whom the principles and the general scheme of planting have been carefully explained, should be on the ground and that the planting should be done under his supervision in so far as placing and size of trees is concerned. The Commission believe that if only a limited amount of money is available that money should be expended on large specimens, even at the expense of leaving the greater part of the work in an unfinished condition. It is much better to have the planting seem inadequate than to have it seem thin and trivial, because inadequacy can be remedied by appropriations, but thinness means a quarter century to bring about results.

12. JUDICIARY SQUARE: Mr. Payne brought before the Commission planting plans for Judiciary Square including a plan for the hedge which was approved. The Commission made an inspection of the ground and noted with regret the unfortunate arrangement of approaches to the north front of the City Hall (District Court House). Granted that, in a measure, this arrangement is the outcome of the plan, now abandoned, to bring prison vans to the central doorway, the design should have been radically revised when it was decided to deliver prisoners at the east end of the building.

The result now is that a broad and unnecessary drive sweeps past the north front on an incline to the east instead of paralleling the horizontal lines of the building. At the northeast corner the drive branches on a warped down grade with the inevitable ugly triangle of sod entirely out of harmony with the building. A grass terrace level with the building with direct approaches and broad steps at the east end would seem to be a far better and more dignified treatment.

It is to be hoped that more thought will be given to the relations of the approaches to buildings and to suppressing, so far as possible, the endless curves, lozenges, hearts, and triangles, that occur in the city where walks intersect.

The Commission is strongly opposed to the acute angles of intersection of paths, with the street sidewalk being carried through to their ultimate meeting. Acute angles should be truncated and treated with appropriate design of curve or straight lines, as the case may be. A conspicuous illustration is in the meeting of the curved walk with sidewalk near the intersection of D and Fifth Streets. It is impossible to plant hedging in such a corner and the sharp end of the wedge will be weak and unsatisfactory in design.

13. ROCK CREEK PARK - RECREATION GROUNDS NEAR BRIGHTWOOD RESERVOIR: Two plans

were submitted each showing a development based on present and future recreation requirements and in addition a necessary future addition of playground area by abandoning the proposed temporary entrance drive from the intersection of Sixteenth Street and Kennedy Street and the carrying out of the proposed extension of Utah Avenue with its bridge and double street car line to connect at the temporary entrance as shown on the "rider" marked Nos. 1-2. Thus would be secured a better entrance to the park proper and would allow the better arrangement of a needed children's playground.

The extension of Utah Avenue from Kennedy Street and Sixteenth Street with its street car system is an essential future development which must be met at this point, inasmuch as the existing conditions but one block east of Sixteenth Street and Kennedy Street preclude the possibility of placing the Utah Street extension further north.

Plan No. 2 which was approved as a preliminary plan without change by the Commission arranges for the following:

(a) A Field House with such suitable accommodations for young and old of both sexes as may be necessary for the extensive use to which the playground area is to be put. The field house is planned with a suitable porch on three sides to give a distant outlook on all sides, especially across Rock Creek, and shade to onlookers. Planned as a part of the development of the building is a suitable stage on the east side for band concerts, musicals, community singing, or even theatrical productions - the stage being provided with so-called "steam curtains" during a change of scene.

(b) A Music Court or open-air auditorium directly east of the field house, flanked by grass tennis courts (which may be utilized for more seating or standing space as necessity may require) is provided with trees to give partial shade and paths for direct communication.

(c) Tennis and Roque Courts are provided, access being provided through the former by a path of suitable width which is bordered by trees.

(d) A Tea House of rustic architecture is planned for the area west of the play field and is so situated on a commanding point of land as to secure a particularly pleasing view of Rock Creek Valley and its accompanying creek.

(e) A Playfield to the south of the field-house affords additional area for the more strenuous outdoor games of baseball, football, cricket, and lacrosse, as the growing conditions may warrant.

Pedestrian circulation in certain defined areas is determined by gravel or macadam paths - such as are used in the best modern development of country park treatment.

(f) Accessibility is provided for by park roads, paths, and trolley lines to further increase the maximum use to which the area is to be put.

14. MCPHERSON SQUARE: Five plans for McPherson Square were submitted but action on them was withheld until the next meeting.

15. MERIDIAN HILL PARK: The Commission considered two schemes for an elaboration of the wall treatment at the corner of Sixteenth and W Streets, which had been prepared at its suggestion. It was decided that the original scheme of a simple wall treatment should be carried out.

A revised treatment of the intersection of the cross axis on the hillside with the cascade, suggested by the architect, was approved. This change included a simplified treatment of the walls flanking the cascade walks.

A question about planting of cedars against the great terrace, decided in favor of the planting, caused a slight modification of the pool and planting areas.

16. FORT LINCOLN CEMETERY: A model of the proposed development was submitted for the inspection of the Commission by the designers, Mr. Horace W. Peaslee,

architect, and Mr. John H. Small, landscape architect. The submission of the collaborative scheme for the owners, Highway Commission and park system was for the purpose of drawing out objections before construction work proceeded. Action was deferred pending an inspection of the work accomplished at the time of the next meeting of the Commission.

The Commission adjourned at 3:30 p.m. for an inspection trip to the Lincoln Memorial, the Mall, Judiciary Square, Meridian Hill Park, and Sixteenth Street heights extended.

Approved:

March 30, 1920.

Sir:

The Commission of Fine Arts, after inspecting the model of the memorial to General Meade, by Mr. Charles Grafly, sculptor, and Messrs. Simon & Simon, architects, approve the same.

Certain minor points in regard to some of the architectural features have been discussed with the sculptor and architects, and have been agreed to by them. These points will be developed as the studies progress. They have to do chiefly with the use of certain materials and do not affect the artistic merits of the composition.

Very respectfully, yours,

(signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Hon. Newton D. Baker, Chairman,
Meade Memorial Commission,
War Department,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT A.

March 30, 1920.

Dear Mr. Grafly:

I am sending you herewith a copy of a letter sent to Hon. Newton D. Baker, Chairman of the Meade Memorial Commission, appointed by Congress, in which the Commission of Fine Arts approves your model of the Meade Memorial. The few minor changes in the model, which the Commission considers desirable, are known to you, and we understand you will give them attention.

I congratulate you on the success of your work.

Cordially yours,

(signed) Charles Moore

Chairman.

Charles Grafly, Esq.,
Twentieth & Cherry Streets,
Philadelphia, Pa.

OLMSTED BROTHERS
Brookline, Mass.

3rd March, 1920.

Colonel C. S. Ridley,
Sec'y and Executive Officer,
Commission of Fine Arts,
1729 New York Avenue, Washington, D. C.

Dear Colonel Ridley:

I have your letter of February 18th with enclosure. I return the blueprint herewith.

It is not clear to me from the letters whether any or all of the buildings shown on the blueprint on either side of the extension of Fort Avenue are existing and permanent structures or mere suggestions of the architect. If the former, there is no question that the proposed change of site is desirable; in fact, something of the kind is practically essential.

The change of location ought not to be finally and definitely approved without a more detailed and carefully studied plan for the surroundings, showing the necessary grading with precision, or without assurance that enough of this grading and other surrounding work will be done by the City to make the setting satisfactory.

The following points occur to me as needing careful study:

In bringing the Key Monument so near the old fort, but in a position which has no apparent relation to it in design, it would be easy to produce an unpleasant effect. This ought to be studied on the ground by some very discriminating person and some means adopted for making the relation a pleasant one, or minimizing its awkwardness. The sketch of roads, paths and foliage does not suggest to me that this difficulty has been appreciated or guarded against.

In order to make the view of the Monument from Fort Avenue satisfactory, the grade must continue to rise from the corner of McComas Street to the Monument. This would mean an elevation of not less than 30.5 (Baltimore City Datum) at the Monument and preferably a little higher. The highest ground between the northwesterly salient of the old fort and the Monument is a little above elevation 34, but it can be graded down to elevation 30. To grade the extension of Fort Avenue, as shown on the print, with the flanking masses of trees, so as to make an evenly graded rectangle about 300 by 800 feet, rising to elevation 30.5 at the proposed monument site, would require a slight cut along the southerly side and a heavy fill along the northerly side, with a total of not far from 50,000 cubic yards of filling. This is a very rough estimate, made by mere inspection of the countours, but it indicates that considerable money must be forthcoming if the plan is to be a success. Moreover, the bottom step at the entrance on the southerly side of the southernmost building of the Immigration Station appears to be 10.8 or about 20 feet below the grade of the proposed rectangle leading up to the Key Monument, and it is only 200 feet from the northerly side of that rectangle. I am inclined to think, therefore, that it would be entirely impracticable to work out satisfactory grades for a straight road such as shown on the blueprint leading from the vicinity of the Key Monument to the Immigration Station and past it to the Immigration Slip.

There are also some questions, although less serious ones, as to the grading of the proposed road in the opposite direction leading to the "formal landing piers". If the building marked "Barracks" is already constructed these difficulties would be decidedly serious.

Of course the above mentioned difficulties, and some others which would result from carrying out the plan as drawn on the blueprint, do not directly concern the Key Monument and are matters in regard to which your Commission probably has no jurisdiction unless it is called upon by the War Department to advise in regard to the general treatment of the whole Fort McHenry area.

But even from the narrowest point of view in regard to the Key Monument itself, the approval of this plan for its location ought not to be given without reasonable assurance that some agreed and satisfactory plan can and will be carried out sufficiently far and sufficiently well to make a proper setting for the Monument.

I see that this question of how much the City will be both willing and able to do has also disturbed Mr. Niehaus.

Very truly yours,

(signed) F. L. Olmsted.

Enclosure -
print.

X-111 C.

March 30, 1920.

Dear Mr. Shirley:

The Commission have to advise that, pursuant to the inspection on the grounds by several of its members last Thursday, they have given careful consideration to your request in behalf of the City Plan Committee of Baltimore to place the Key statue at a point within the original historic reservation and near its outline, at a point about 400 feet south of the accepted site.

The matter was submitted to Mr. Olmsted, who was a member of the Baltimore Plan Commission and who gave particular attention to the location of the Key Monument. He approves of the proposed plan, provided assurance be given that the grading and planting will actually be done. This Commission agrees with Mr. Olmsted, and approves the proposed location, with the proviso that, before definite action be taken to erect the statue, the authorities shall be in a position to give assurance that the entire work will be carried out.

Sincerely, yours,

(signed) Charles Moore

Chairman.

Mr. Joseph W. Shirley, Chairman,
City Plan Committee,
Baltimore, Md.

EXHIBIT D.

March 30, 1920.

Dear Colonel Lawton:

The Commission are of the opinion that as a beginning of the improvements in front of the Lee Mansion at Arlington the flower beds should be replaced by a box hedge -- the box transplanted from the hedge near the greenhouse. If the transplanting cannot be done for lack of money, then the beds should be put into grass this Spring, the iron vases should be removed, and the pampas-grass taken out; also the placards with stanzas of poetry should be removed. I hope you can accomplish this much without trouble.

Very respectfully, yours,

(signed) Charles Moore

Chairman.

Colonel F. H. Lawton, U. S. A.,
Zone Supply Officer,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT E.

March 3, 1920.

Dear General Beach:

When there is a lull in the very deserving congratulations you are receiving I hope to be permitted to pay my respects to the Chief of Engineers officially and personally. Meantime may I suggest that with the increased use of East Potomac Park the bareness of the War College strikes an increasing number of people. A planting plan for the easterly side of the War College has been prepared for some time. It was made by Frederick Law Olmsted and approved by William Mitchell Kendall of McKim, Mead and White. The Office of Public Buildings and Grounds has the material for the planting, and I am quite sure by the exercise of authority and persuasion you can bring about a very attractive result without cost.

Cordially, yours,

(signed) Charles Moore

Chairman.

Major General Lansing H. Beach,
Chief of Engineers, U. S. A.,
Washington, D. C.

